

NSC BRIEFING

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WORLD REACTION TO SOVIET EARTH SATELLITE

- I. High-riding Khrushchev has promptly moved to milk the maximum political advantage out of the Soviet earth satellite achievement. He appears confident that the ICBM test, the successful launching of the earth satellite, and the announcement of a test of a "hydrogen device of a new design," will greatly strengthen the USSR's politico-strategic position vis-a-vis the West and will produce a deep impact on neutralist opinion. []

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- A. Khrushchev declared on 8 October that the satellite and long-range rockets mean that fighter and bomber aircraft "can be put into museums." He said that "rockets are terrible, pitiless weapons," and pointedly advised "those responsible for the fate of peoples" to "think seriously about these things."
- B. The Soviet leader also warned the US and its friends in the Middle East not to intervene in Syria. Noting that the Turks had denuded their frontiers with the USSR by concentrating forces against Syria, he suggested that "they should have a good think about this."

- II. Soviet propaganda media have concentrated on claiming a "brilliant victory" for Soviet science--one which demonstrates the superiority of the Socialist system. Soviet comment has followed the theme of the first announcement that "the freed and conscious labor of the people of the new socialist society turn even the most daring of man's dreams into a reality."

- A. Soviet scientist, P. L. Kapitza, said the USSR was able to launch the satellite first because the Soviet system makes it "easier to organize, inspire and direct" teams of scientists.
- B. Moscow radio on 7 October contrasted Western efforts to use scientific achievements "for the aim of total destruction" with Soviet goal of "speeding up at a gigantic pace the progress of civilization."

III. Soviet scientific achievements will probably boost Khrushchev's domestic popularity. They will at least temporarily strengthen his position in dealing with any opposition which may remain within the higher echelons of the Soviet party.

- A. In the foreign policy field, these successes will strengthen Moscow's hand in expanding Soviet influence in the Middle East and Afro-Asia, and in selling "neutralism."
- B. Pravda on 7 October predicted that the Soviet success will force the US to revamp some of its foreign policies and stated that US "ruling circles" must face up to three questions: necessity of peaceful coexistence, stopping the armaments race, and ending the cold war.

IV. Chinese Communist reaction, unlike the initial Soviet comment, was quick to declare that US claims to military supremacy are now empty and that "US hopes for world hegemony have been shattered."

- A. All Satellites are giving Soviet announcements maximum play. East German Party boss Walter Ulbricht declared that the satellite "is witness to the further transformation of the balance of power in the world in favor of the USSR, the Socialist camp, and the countries in the wide zone of peace."

V. In Western Europe there were five major lines of comment:

- A. belief that the Western countries through joint efforts could surpass Soviet scientific achievements;
 1. The London Daily Telegraph suggested that the Soviet success was due to an advantage inherent in a dictatorship and a closed economy. "It is a question of priorities and the power to enforce them."
- B. recognition that launching of satellite is a momentous event and a great Soviet achievement;
- C. surprise and disappointment that USSR beat the US in this field;
- D. conclusion that the Soviets are ahead of the US scientifically and that the West has suffered a political setback;
- E. belief that this achievement has great military implications and that it is not in safe hands.

VI. Comment in Asia and Africa stresses blow to US prestige.

- A. Leftist papers in Egypt praised the Soviet achievement and ridiculed American "anxiety" and "panic." More conservative papers predicted an acceleration in great power arms race and concluded that other nations should be even more hesitant to align themselves with either the West or the USSR.
- B. Israeli press saw satellite as major prestige victory for the USSR among those "underdeveloped peoples" (the Arabs) which tend to set their course according to demonstrations of strength by the great powers.
- C. Indian prime minister Nehru, speaking in Japan, stressed that new scientific developments have antiquated present-day politics and foreign policies and rendered obsolete such

D. A leading Japanese military commentator (Saburo Hayashi) stated that the satellite demonstrates the superiority of Soviet technology.

E. Most striking reaction so far has come from Tehran, where US Embassy reports that:

"Most Iran government officials...have long been convinced of US...superiority over "barbarous" Soviets. Both officials and public...are beginning suspect Soviet at least equal US or perhaps superior in long run, this weakens Iranian will to resist Soviets...officials have tended show embarrassment when subject of satellite is brought up, apparently feeling that satellite represents such blow to US prestige that to discuss it would be impolite."